Reviews and Notices of Books.


Literary criticism of Freudian theories in the past has been largely conspicuous for its unscientific and patently prejudiced attitudes. Dr. MacCurdy is an avowed disciple of Freud, and for many years has studied and applied therapeutically the psychoanalytical principles involved. Such an authority with a wide reputation gives us a scientific criticism of psychoanalysis with suggested formulations which, however much they may differ from those of the orthodox school, must be thoughtfully dealt with. As the writer points out, some knowledge of psychopathology is necessary for a proper understanding of the text. The purpose of the book is twofold. "On the one hand, it is an attempt to show from demonstration of the limitations and inconsistencies of Freudian formulations that a broader system is needed, while, on the other, an attempt is made to outline some tentative hypotheses to make good this need." It seems that much of the criticism is directed at the material contained in the American translation of Freud's A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, which was so inaccurately rendered as to be highly misleading, and though MacCurdy states that reference to the original was in places necessary, it is a matter of doubt how much he did so refer. Had he used the later English translation he would have been on safer ground.

It will be well to refer mainly to those points upon which the writer shows most difference of opinion. He starts off by regarding Freud's use of the term 'unconscious' as being frequently ambiguous, and takes as an example of this the use of the word in the conflict between the unconscious sex-impulses and 'resistance,' resistance being not part of the unconscious but of the ego. He says "a component of the ego, therefore, of which consciousness is not aware, which operates unconsciously and can only be recognized by the technic of psychoanalysis—this is not part of the unconscious." Such an example, he thinks, is not isolated, and he would prefer to abolish the term 'fore-conscious' to avoid confusion. Though 'wish' is employed throughout, it is thought to have an anthropomorphic tendency, and 'instinct-motivation' is preferred as more scientific. Much fault is found with Freud's instinct theory and his wholesale application of the principle of hedonism. It is denied that an instinct can be reversed into its opposite or turned against the subject, and doubt is expressed even that an instinct can be sublimated, for more likely another instinctive factor enters in, or one here deals with an ideational modification. Infantile sexuality is thought to be more akin to 'organic pleasure,' and in the development of object-libido it is regretted that altruism, which may be more potent than
egoism or narcissism, is much neglected by Freud. That primal sex phantasies may be inherited seems to be a highly dangerous concept to invoke in a system of psychopathology where autogenetic factors are all-important. In the Freudian theory of repression anthropomorphism is again seen as rife, and the ego "is represented as something which both flees and repels at the same time and by the same process—an impossible view." MacCurdy sees much obscurity in various passages concerning this 'ego,' which he states is frequently employed as an equivalent for personality, and also for instincts of preservation. Resistance is part of the ego, but unconscious. How can it co-operate in psychoanalytic treatment? Narcissism in many respects is not adequately differentiated from egoism and self-preservation, and the concept of dementia praecox in terms of narcissism is freely criticized. The relation of persecutory delusions to homosexuality is denied in an unqualified fashion. Freud's theory of the psychological mechanisms productive of the symptoms of melancholia is regarded as 'a creditable bit of speculation' which does not fit the facts. It is not admitted that loss, real or unconscious, is the invariable precipitating cause of depression, and it is said that the theory has been built up on a study of a small number of cases of 'reactive depression,' which is a mixed psychosis. MacCurdy is disappointed at the lack of light Freud throws upon the study of emotions, and in his making fear the centre of all his psychopathology. That fear should have its basic root in the act of birth is regarded as a preposterous notion. The writer can accept but little of the libidinous origin of fear, and believes that to get this emotion the instinct of self-preservation must operate.

The orthodox theory of dreams also meets with much adverse criticism. An alternative theory should be considered, viz., that we sleep in order to dream and to enjoy another type of psychic activity, and it is not considered necessary to presume any abeyance of the censorship when the day-remnants make content with unconscious processes. The validity of universal-symbolic language is questioned, and also it is doubted whether day-remnants have anything to do with dreaming as such. "The incomprehensibility of dreams is largely a matter of the selectivity of memory process by which continuity is established between the imaginary experiences of the night and the real ones of the day. It is more a matter of dream destruction than of dream work."

In the technique of psychoanalysis MacCurdy sees much unconscious suggestion at work, but regards this as little or no drawback, since as long as sufficient unconscious energy is deflected from outlet via symptoms to outlet n constructive activities recovery takes place. Actual observation fails to confirm the psychoanalytic theory of autoeroticism, and the characteristic adult reactions to early exaggerated autoerotic impulses are strongly denied. Trigant Burrow's ideas of the 'primary subjective state' and 'primary identification' are regarded as highly helpful in the classifying of many psychopathological problems. The well-known theories of Rivers are considered at length and, though considered full of error, are thought to be extremely stimulating.

The latter half of the book is devoted to the pragmatic conceptions of instincts and their classification. Thus the ego, sex, and herd instincts, with
their motivations, are discussed, and their co-operation and conflicts dealt with. These chapters constitute MacCurdy's constructive formulations as opposed to the destructive criticism in the earlier portion of the volume. Much of this later material appeared in the report of a symposium of the American Psychopathological Association, which was published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* (vol. xvi, No. 4, October, 1921).

Though there is a great deal in the contents of this book which Freidians will vehemently dissent from, in that evidently there has been some mis-apprehension of the pioneer's real meaning, the fact that a psychiatrist of repute has frankly demonstrated what to him appear as ambiguities and difficulties in accepting Freud's views can only be helpful to those who are themselves struggling for a clearer conception of psychoanalytic doctrines, and who perhaps are less able to sum up their own scientific uncertainties. As such theories extend and are modified, they undoubtedly become more and more difficult for the average mind to grasp, as so much of the abstract always must be. The later constructive chapters make easier reading, and will be found stimulating to all psychopathologists. To discuss here the various points raised is not feasible, and we have contented ourselves with only mentioning the important ones. It is patent how many these pages are the product of reflective thought, and few readers will not be the wiser for a careful consideration of them.

C. S. R.


In these pages an attempt has been made to give "an answer to the questions which many men have asked themselves regarding their reactions to the environment of war" and "to show the late war as a great educational experience, the results of which are still being felt." The writer was a chaplain at the front who was not only in close touch with the manifestation of the various emotional forces engendered by the war environment and circumstances, but who made excellent use of his opportunities for observation. He opens well with a discussion of the fundamental conceptions of psychology, in which he takes up a dynamic and behaviouristic attitude, recognizing behind consciousness great instinctive tendencies and unconscious processes which furnish the motives for most, if not all, human conduct. Though in the main he is a follower of McDougall, whom he frequently quotes, he goes further, and sees behind instinct a primal *élan vital* as a basic urge, and also differs to some extent from that psychologist's views on the 'group mind.' In subsequent chapters he deals at some length with the war impulse, danger instincts at the front, sentiment at the front, courage, the unconscious mind, and the influence of group life upon the individual in the army. He concludes that "the quality of the education supplied by the war—whether it was beneficial or the reverse—will depend both upon the nature of the dispositions aroused and, more especially, upon the degree to which they were organized within the mind." It is at once evident that the author has excellent psychological insight, that he has read widely, and moreover has added original